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US WEST IMPLEMENTS INTRALATA DIALING PARITY ON FEBRUARY 4

Customers of US West Communications will be able to choose and conveniently use the long-distance company of their choice for their intraLATA, or local long-distance, calls starting February 4.

On that date, US West will implement a new element of telephone long-distance competition in Montana called intraLATA dialing parity. LATAs (local access and transport areas) were created after the breakup of AT&T in the 1980s to mark the boundaries within which the former Bell companies like US West could transport long-distance calls. Montana is divided into an eastern and western LATA in which calls placed in the same LATA are considered intraLATA calls while calls placed between LATAs or outside of Montana are interLATA calls. For example, a call from Helena to Missoula is considered an intraLATA call while a call from Helena to Billings or Helena to Chicago is an interLATA call.

Currently long-distance calls placed by dialing "1" plus the area code and telephone number that originate and terminate in the same LATA are carried by US West. If a person wants to use another carrier for such an intraLATA long-distance call, he or she must first dial the several extra digits that make up the preferred carrier's access code. Most Montanans have not been able to preselect the intraLATA long-distance carrier of their choice.

Starting February 4, US West customers can choose their intraLATA long-distance carrier and use that carrier for these calls on a "1-plus" basis, without having to dial an access code. Just as customers already choose a carrier for their other long-distance calls, they will be able to select an intraLATA carrier and not have to dial extra digits to access that carrier.

US West customers may choose the same long-distance carrier for both their intraLATA and other long-distance calls, or they may select two different carriers. Those who do not

choose a new intraLATA carrier will continue to be served by US West for those calls.

A US West customer who chooses an intraLATA carrier by May 5 will not be charged for the carrier change. All changes after that will be cost \$5.00 per change. Customers should call US West or the long-distance company of their choice to switch carriers.

"This is a historic day for US West customers as they now have the ability to choose a carrier for

local long distance calls," said PSC Chairman Dave Fisher. "Customers will now have the ability to place a local long distance call without having to dial cumbersome codes to access the carrier

of their choice. This is truly a benefit to all US West customers."

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